

WASHINGTON – “While I am encouraged both by Secretary Nicholson’s pledge to investigate this situation and the VA’s plans to notify and offer free credit monitoring services to veterans affected by this security breach, I have two questions.

“First, why were the records of 20,000 veterans apparently not encrypted? If that is the case, given last year’s experience VA officials should have exercised greater caution.

“Second, why did this incident happen at all given the fact that the VA already has the guidelines and tools needed to prevent such breaches? Last December 13, the VA announced sweeping changes to its Information Technology System, and nine days later the President signed into law legislation passed by Congress (S. 3421) establishing new provisions to protect veterans and service members from misuse of their personal information.

“Clearly there is some sort of a disconnect between veterans officials in Washington and in the field. I hope Secretary Nicholson will identify that disconnect and move swiftly to correct it.”

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